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ABSTRACT

The ways that historical factors, public policies, and changes in higher education have influenced quality evaluation, accreditation, and ethical practices in higher education are considered. It is suggested that during the last two decades relationships between government and voluntary accrediting agencies have become alienated. Regulatory and coordinating functions have increased greatly as states have assumed coordinating, planning, accrediting, certifying, and licensing roles. The federal government also established accrediting agencies to determine institutional eligibility for federal funds. Voluntary accrediting agencies tried to coordinate efforts, both regional and professional, through a loose federation of the regional accrediting agencies. A major question is whether states should go beyond state licensure roles in seeking to improve the standing and quality of an institution or whether this function should be left to regional voluntary accrediting agencies. The need and the demand of society for consumer protection and accountability in higher education are considered. Among the abuses that need to be addressed are the following: questionable admissions and grading policies, failure to provide promised services or to offer courses listed, and questionable refund policies. Among the strengths of voluntary agencies are the following: they emphasize self-study, they help protect institutions against political encroachments by outside organizations, and they assist in promoting the diversity and pluralism of higher education. Among the criticisms of voluntary agencies are the following: standards for institutional accreditation appear to have dropped; regional agencies do not make their reports public; and they have not done much about off-campus extension centers, programs abroad, branches of parent schools, and education at military bases. (SW)

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QUALITY, QUANGOS, AND THE STATES

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QUALITY, QUANGOS, AND THE STATES

Norma Foreman, Ladies and Gentlemen:

I had mixed emotions when Lou Rabineau informally asked me if I would consent to being the keynote speaker this evening. You know what mixed emotions are: They are what you feel when you see your mother-in-law drive off a cliff in your brand new Cadillac. Or, they are what you feel when you see your 16 year-old daughter come home at 4 o'clock in the morning with a Gideon Bible under her arm.

Anyway, I was pleased because it's always nice to be wanted. Man cannot live by bread alone, you know, he needs to be buttered up once in a while.

And I was both dumbfounded and surprised to be asked because the last time I gave a speech when Lou Rabineau was present he was overheard saying: "Joe's speech was like Wagnerian music. It's not as bad as it sounds." What's more, on another occasion he rushed up to me after a brilliant address and, with bubbling exuberance, remarked: "Joe, every speech you give is better than the next one."

This brings me to Norma Foreman's formal letter of invitation. In it she said that I should try to be lighthearted but hopefully not lightweight. She said she understood from Lou Rabineau that I had grand delusions of adequacy as a speaker who could meet every issue with an open mouth, who could live verbally beyond his intellectual means, and who could speak more clearly than he thinks.

Such dubious flattery reminds me of a story told about Senator Chauncey Depew of New York some years ago. When Depew was called upon to introduce Ambassador Joseph Choate at a dinner one time, he advised the audience that Choate was America's most inveterate after dinner speaker. Said Depew: "All you need to do to Mr. Choate is to open his mouth, drop in a dinner, and up comes a speech." Obviously stung by the unusual introduction, Choate began his remarks with this rejoinder: "Mr. Depew says that if you open my mouth and drop in a dinner, up will come a speech. But I warn you that if you open your mouths and drop in one of Mr. Depew's speeches, up will come your dinners."

I've been introduced in a lot of different ways. Once, someone concluded his introduction by saying: "And now we're going to hear the latest dope from New York."

Because I played Big Ten football, was the blocking back for the first Heisman Trophy Winner, and was backfield coach during my graduate years at the University of Chicago, I was introduced another time as a warm athletic supporter. And on a more recent occasion when I was Commissioner of Education, I was compared to a mushroom: You are always in the dark, you are constantly covered with manure, and any time you stick your head up, someone cuts it off. I have often been left bloody but unendowed.

Being a highly visible Commissioner of Education in an important state has often reminded me of the revised version of Murphy's Law: Anytime anything hits the fan it is never evenly distributed. As important state officials, you know this as well as I do.

Norma Foreman gave me some strict instructions by telling me neither to depress your spirits nor to elevate your sensitivities. She also asked me to submit a title to her for what I had to say, which I did. She promptly wrote back that I would be well advised to pick another subject, since the one I had chosen would hardly do justice to the occasion. Some educators would rather fight than switch, but with my usual tact and humble obedience, I readily agreed to change the title--the speech, however, remains the same.

As you can see, I think the world looks a lot better from behind a laugh. Laughter, like money, is a sovereign remedy and a universal lubricant. A sense of humor, it has been said, that shows a man his own absurdities will save him from all sins, or nearly all--except those worth committing. In any case, no matter how hard I try to be an educator, these days, cheerfulness keeps creeping in.

I get a lot of requests after I make speeches. But I keep on making them anyway.

Since the topic of your current love-in is Quality in Higher Education, Norma said I should feel free to comment on how historical factors, public policies, and changing tides in higher education have placed you in the maelstrom of quality evaluation, licensing, program discontinuance, and arbitration of ethical practices--and how to deal with it all.

This is a large order and I shall not do justice to the invitation, I'm sure. To cover that ground in a reasonable time with any brilliance would strongly suggest that I regard myself

as on a leave of absence from Mt. Olympus, endowed with revealed truths and received wisdoms beyond the ordinary ken of men. I think I have made it clear that Lou Rabineau and Norma Foreman regard me like the body at an Irish wake. It is absolutely essential in order to have the party, but you don't expect it to do very much.

With your permission, which I shall not stop to solicit, let me begin more seriously with some historic forces, comments on voluntary accrediting agencies, state agencies, quality, and what I see in the future.

From some standpoints, I have been fortunate in my career to have been both an employee in a state education department governed by a board of regents with extensive powers over coordination, regulation, accreditation, planning, evaluation, certification, and licensing, and, simultaneously, Secretary, then Chairman of a regional accrediting agency, the Commission on Higher Education of the Middle States Association. I have straddled both sides of the aisle during a period of ten years, worked in a voluntary accrediting agency for 15 years, and in a state agency for 26.

The Middle State Commission on Higher Education, whatever else its faults, was gifted in several ways, not the least being that continuously, since its founding in 1919 until 1960, there were important representatives of state education agencies in its membership, three such state agencies in the original Commission of 12. And all of this despite, as an early 1919 member of the Commission remarked, "Fear of government in educational affairs and yet a realization that there must be some means of educational

control and guidance, produced the accrediting agency." For a period of forty years, then, there was intimate association between government and voluntary accrediting in at least one voluntary accrediting association. I do not mean to imply that there were joint close operating procedures during all that time with all states or even with one state. I do mean to suggest that, unlike Muskie and Brzezinski, state government and voluntary accrediting in the Middle States area were not poles apart. Between the Commission and at least one state, there was parity of esteem, each held in respect by the other over a period of many years.

Speaking nationally now, something happened in the last two decades which resulted in forces tending to rupture or alienate relationships between government and the voluntary accrediting agencies. Hostility crept in. That something was the unprecedented expansion of higher education post-war and the massive entrance of both the federal and state governments into the educational arena. Our democracy has continually raised its expectations for educational opportunities for its people, though we have often been sloppy about the quality we legally and popularly expected of them. Regulatory and coordinating functions took off in quantum leaps with states assuming coordinating, planning, accrediting, certifying, and licensing roles. And when government expands in broad jumps, hostility follows because of course voluntary effort is stifled, constrained, or duplicated. There is a reluctance in this country to be ruled.

While voluntary accrediting agencies were busy with evaluating and accrediting the sheer increase in numbers of institutions and were making attempts to improve their procedures, they began to find that there were new peers in the accrediting field, peers, meaning state agencies, which had the power of laws behind them. Moreover, the federal government with its largesse decided it needed to establish a mechanism by which it could be sure that its money was well spent, and it thus entered the accrediting business itself, qualifying accrediting agencies for institutional eligibility purposes. It got to like the job so much that it even began accrediting agencies which had nothing or little to do with eligibility for federal funds. Seventy-five agencies are now accredited, with six more waiting to be recognized. Parenthetically, in my view, the Federal Division of Eligibility and Agency Evaluation has not done the job expected of it and should be replaced. I have a suggestion.

Finally, voluntary accrediting was trying to coordinate all of its efforts, both regional and professional, through a loose federation of the regional accrediting agencies, devoted to homogenization of policies and practices and to self-protection, and the establishment of the National Commission on Accrediting for regulating the growth of accrediting, quite unsuccessfully, as it turned out, from the start. All of this led to the COPA, the Council on Postsecondary Accreditation, which, in my view, is a bankrupt organization that has had poor leadership, and has been characterized by aimlessness and pusillanimity or gutlessness, if you prefer. The recent resignation of Kenneth Young has

created a wholesome vacancy. COPA has now recognized 52 accrediting agencies with 12 more waiting for recognition. Both the federal government and COPA have ironically encouraged the proliferation of voluntary professional or specialized accrediting agencies, and therefore the fractionation of higher institutions and the higher education community.

In a relatively short period, then, the accrediting field became crowded and complex and replete with ambiguities and unsolved problems.

What historical factors, social issues, and influences have brought government, and especially state coordinating boards into a stronger role than they have played in the past in evaluating quality, accrediting programs, and licensing institutions, and, conversely, have called into question the quality and effectiveness of voluntary accrediting agencies, especially the regionals? Should the linkage connecting eligibility for federal funds and voluntary accreditation be severed and reliance on state agencies substituted? That issue is still very much alive in Washington. Should state agencies go it alone within their own states in evaluating and accrediting quality and programs? Stated another way, to what extent should states rely on voluntary accreditation, if at all?

No one argues that states should not engage in state licensure which defines a minimum permissible level of institutional activity. The question is, should states go beyond that or should the task of seeking to improve the standing and quality of an institution be left to regional voluntary accrediting agencies?

These questions are consuming too much time and attention on the part of all those affected, the states, the voluntary accrediting agencies, the federal government, COPA, not to mention the poor institutions which have enough trouble coping with inflation and survival.

Let me explore these questions and the issues involved in some depth and begin with some remarks on regional voluntary accreditation. Voluntary accreditation is characterized by either one of two tendencies: It either tends to be a gyroscopic instrument, providing balance without forward motion. Like faculties, it does not easily change direction. Or, in the other case, the delicate balance between institutional welfare and the public interest over time becomes so disturbed that the scales become heavily weighted on the institutional side, with the consequence that other instrumentalities are being developed to serve the public interest in accrediting. I shall speak more about that later. Parenthetically, the two greatest innovators around in education are a) the courts, and b) the threat of going out of business.

Suffice it to say now that as higher education has expanded and proliferated, the need and the demand of society for consumer protection and accountability have become more urgent.

By and large, accrediting agencies were organized historically like trade associations, for service to their members and for self-enforcement of standards, and have <u>not</u> been required to justify their policies and requirements to anyone except to their own membership. Until recently, that is. The federal government

and COPA have become judges of what voluntary accrediting agencies do, and as I have said, it isn't hard to get blessed by either organization. And more recently, some states have also entered the judging arena.

Accrediting agencies have been criticized largely within the academic community for almost fifty years; only within the last decade or so have the external consumer, public and private agencies, government, and important individuals unconnected with accrediting, subjected the accreditation function and those who carry it out to searching and sometimes searing criticism, some of it undeserved.

Once accreditation was assumed to have both God and science on its side. It was inscrutable and hardly anyone outside the academic community tried to unscrew it. Well, that day has clearly passed. Voluntary accreditation is in trouble, especially the regionals, so deep that some very capable educators, presidents among them, characterize it as a life and death struggle.

But, if accrediting didn't exist it would have to be invented, in view of our open and diverse system of higher education. de Toqueville long ago pointed out the uniqueness of our society, its dependence on voluntary effort. If accrediting is an important public function, and if voluntary accrediting fails, the only recourse is the assumption of the burden by governmental authorities, state and federal. That is not a remote possibility any longer. I give you Sanders First Law of Bureaucratic Meddling: The zeal of governmental bureaucrats to regulate

higher education varies inversely with the academic community's commitment and ability to deal with its own problems. I often wonder if the accrediting function is not being viewed politically rather than educationally, as a source of power rather than as a stimulus and a help toward maintaining and improving quality. We all know the new Golden Rule: He who has the gold makes the rule. And perhaps, Kingman Brewster said it best: "Having bought the button, the federal government now wants to design the coat." There is a warning here for state agencies and higher institutions.

Along with the erosion of confidence in higher education, not to mention all the rest of our social institutions including the notion of motherhood, a loss of credibility accompanied by distrust and even cynicism (I define a cynic as a person who, when he sees some flowers, immediately looks around for a coffin), has come a decline in the reverent regard for the accreditation function, at least as it is practiced, this in contrast to the time when it carried such weight it had to be capitalized. There is what I call a growing veneration gap. As Tallulah Bankhead once said about a play after seeing it with Alexander Woollcott, "there is less here than meets the eye."

Having said these things, let me quickly make a second important statement: Voluntary accreditation is essential to the conduct of higher education in this country and to preserving the higher educational community's prerogative of policing itself and of the responsibilities that go with it. The very essense of voluntary accreditation is to maintain the freedom of institutions

while keeping them socially responsible. That holy and noble purpose has not been, of course, perfected by some margin which is why we are here this evening.

Anyway, local control is a minor branch of theology in America and no institution is going to let voluntary accrediting agencies or especially state coordinating boards forget it.

Accrediting is a public responsibility no matter who does it, and as accountability for stewardship of a public trust. Indeed, one can go so far as to say that whenever any organization performs a function of sufficiently important nature, it can be said to be performing, in effect, a governmental function. In short we have public functions being performed by private action. I have viewed for over 25 years, voluntary accrediting agencies as quasi-governmental or quangos,* quasi-autonomous non-governmental organizations, if you prefer. The wisest possible theory and practice of accrediting are therefore essential.

In my view, the greatest challenge for colleges and universities in this decade, aside from staying alive, will be the maintenance of quality and integrity. I shall speak to those issues now at some length.

I wish I could stay during the rest of your conference and hear what all of you think quality is. Trying to define it is like nailing jello to a tree trunk or like peeling an onion--you know, you peel off one layer after another and eventually you wind up with nothing, except some tears. I am reminded of what Fats Waller once said to a dowager when she asked him for a

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* A word coined by Alan Pifer, President of the Carnegie Corporation.

definition of "jazz." He retorted with unfeigned disdain, "Lady, if you have to ask what it is, don't mess with it." I am reminded too of Jacques Barzun who once remarked that excellence exists where there is the least consciousness of its requirements, or where excellence is a familiar spirit.

In some ways, quality is like pornography: You know it when you see it. Except, to be honest, pornography, like beauty, is in the eyes of the beholder. But come to think of it, since two people may well differ in viewing the same set of characteristics of an institution or of an academic or professional program, quality, too, is often only in the eyes of the beholder. One man's Mede is another man's Persian, or to put another twist on that phrase and to use some French, one man's meat is another man's poisson.

Moreover, the characteristics of excellence in a fine community college may be quite different from those in a doctoral program at the university level. And, of course, when one gets into non-traditional programs like external degrees, there is rich loam to provide for endless exploration and argument. In New York, for example, when I was inaugurated as Commissioner of Education in 1970, I proposed the Regents External Degree Program which now enables the Board of Regents to give associate and baccalaureate degrees in liberal arts, technical and vocational subjects, nursing, and business to people who have never gone to college at all or who may never have seen one. They get credit by examination for what they know no matter how, when, or where they acquired it. More than 11,000 people have graduated, the

best universities in the country have accepted them for further undergraduate or graduate work, and the program has full Middle States accreditation.

I mention this program, not for self-aggrandizement, but to point out that defining quality is not easy. It is elusive and governments cannot legislate it. Using only strictly objective data will not tell you much about quality, although they are useful in reaching subjective judgments. Objective data are probably most useful in determining minimum competence to conduct an institution for initial authorization and continued licensing but those minimum criteria will not yield a perfect correlation with quality.

I'd like to take liberally from a former outstanding Executive Director of the Middle States Commission and add some words of my own as we go along:

Higher education is too complex to yield to simple numerical description, and that accreditation which rests upon how much of this, how many of that, is at best arbitrary. It takes years of close observation and experimentation to go further than counting degrees, collars, dollars, credits, books, square feet and square heads. You have to get the facts, of course, and give them due consideration. But you take them as illuminating bits and pieces, to be fitted together with other observations, tangible and intangible, and interpreted in the context of the institution's or program's objectives.

Eventually you learn to generalize, to recognize characteristics which predispose to institutional effectiveness, and to

trust the judgment of thoughtful and experienced observers. In fact, the more sophisticated institutional evaluation becomes, the more deliberately it leans upon subjective judgment. One can no longer pretend that the accreditation process is one of scientific objectivity. It is not. The objectivity has to be in the minds of the men and women who evaluate the facts. Any good evaluation depends upon the probing and weighing of intangibles as well as of concrete facts by one or more practicing teachers and administrators or sophisticated governmental bureaucrats (and I use that phrase term in a benevolent way) who have lived with the problems of academic and professional education too long to be wholly theoretical about them, who have been successful enough in their own fields to know quality intimately, and who have been around enough to realize that higher education is a many-splendored, even if no longer a money-splendored, thing, a very delicate and fragile thing (end of paraphrasing).

No one should meddle with colleges and universities who does not know them and love them well. That does not mean that higher institutions are faultless, far from it. It just means that it is easy to reduce the spiritual capital in a university, to impoverish its animating spirit, and to attenuate its mission by unthinking, unprofessional intervention, by ill-conceived political action, by unwarranted, ham-handed, and irrational bureaucratic extirpation of programs, by pitiless handling of unethical behavior, (and I don't define compassion as suspended judgment), and by biased, dogmatic mandating of personal preferences by individual evaluators in regard to academic practice when there

really are several ways of achieving the same objective. I delight in beating a dogma with a stigma. Hanford's Law is appropriate here: Never attribute to malice that which is adequately explained by stupidity.

Probably the most valid and legitimate way of assessing quality is the evaluation of objective data on outcomes, but this field is far too primitive in development to be wholly relied on.

I'd like to refer to Stephen Bailey of Harvard University in a recent study directed at the education provided on military bases by regionally accredited institutions. He speaks generally about the modern forces which seem to have extended the historic reality of academic differences in institutional and programmatic quality and which manifest themselves in, and I quote, "the forms of grade inflation, instructional laziness, easy assessments of transfer credits, guilt-driven allowances for minority status, incoherent academic requirements, and a variety of other laxities" which result in "selling academic credentials at cut rates in an increasingly cut-throat marketplace." He refers to a general condition where academic enterprises "have broken the tethers of quality control, have proliferated educational services and academic credentialing at the price of galloping shoddiness."

I wonder how many of you have read two documents which bring into question the quality and integrity of higher education in this country. The first is the report of the American Assembly, The Integrity of Higher Education, resulting from a recent meeting. It lists several instances of issues, practices, and developments which have lead to public questioning of the integrity

of higher institutions and gives 32 recommendations on how integrity might be restored, among them being the strengthening of regional accreditation in improving the fiduciary and ethical behavior of higher institutions. The second publication is the recent book issued by the Carnegie Council on Policy Studies in Higher Education, called Fair Practices in Higher Education and subtitled, Rights and Responsibilities of Students and Their Colleges, in a period of intensified competition for enrollments. It too lists negative aspects in the conduct of higher education, faults voluntary regional accrediting associations on a number of counts, and calls upon them for reviewing ethical conduct and public disclosure of evaluation reports.

And, finally, let me mention briefly another aspect of lack of quality and integrity in higher education: The abuses, iniquities, frauds, and deceits in intercollegiate athletics. Recent disclosures of illegal transfers of credit for athletes, fraudulent transcripts, and credit for non-attendance in snap courses at remote extension centers, practiced by institutions here in the Southwest and on the West Coast, to mention just the tip of the iceberg, reveal only too well, not only that big-time intercollegiate athletics are a business enterprise with an entertainment function having nothing to do with education, but that these semi-autonomous enclaves within individual university communities are unregulated and not evaluated by anyone, regional or state, that university presidents and especially faculties have lost control of parts of their academic domains, and that universities in another instance have lessened their integrity.

Speaking of integrity, I have often been puzzled by the ironic insistence of regional accrediting agencies that, while their purpose is to attest to quality and institutional integrity, they want nothing to do (until maybe lately) with probity (the same thing as integrity) with respect to consumer issues in education. A critical question is whether an institution can or should have accredited educational quality yet lack integrity or probity in some of its practices. Is probity, meaning a level of virtue or integrity in all things that has been tested and found to be genuine, a proper subject for an accrediting agency? Can an institution be educationally right and morally wrong? This is an issue the answer to which the matter of increasing governmental involvement in education hangs in the balance. Integrity means to me that an institution is doing what it says it does at least at an acceptable minimum level of educational effectiveness and doing it with practices, academic or administrative, that are legally sound, morally right, and ethically correct. This may sound like pious preaching at a high moral altitude, but you have to show me the alternative.*

Highly published reports of abuses, ethical lapses, and academic shoddiness have led to criticisms from the public, private agencies, and governments and have rationalized bases for further governmental encroachments on or legitimate interventions

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* It is, of course, to be presumed that those who talk about integrity have it themselves and know it when they see it, not always a safe assumption.

in, higher education, in the interests of consumer protection and accountability for funds. We all know that Naderization of our society has extended to the academic community, to the extent that colleges and universities are treated like or are perceived as, businesses, namely sellers of services and being charged with failure to deliver the promised product and are in effect being held accountable for misrepresenting their services and not fulfilling their contractual obligations or else doing so in unethical ways.

The issue of consumer protection against abuses and frauds, is one which gives governments sound reason for aroused interest in accrediting and for rather aggressive, sometimes offensive assertion of more authority, or where they have the authority, more action.

Abuses which address consumer interests and invite consumer protection legislation and oversight by some governmental agency voluntary or governmental are, as examples: questionable admissions and grading policies, false or misleading advertisements (and let's not kid ourselves that only proprietary institutions mislead); failure to provide promised services; failure to offer listed courses; questionable refund policies; use of inadequately trained teachers; unavailability of attrition or graduate placement rates; failure to define good academic standing; and standards of progress for matriculated students.

Accrediting agencies, to my knowledge, have flatly declared that, except for addressing only the quality of higher institutions and educational effectiveness, they cannot and should not

be involved as agents of the federal or state governments in reviewing fair practices, or more strictly, consumer issues of the kind described, nor could they monitor compliance with specific requirements in such matters on a frequency which is greater than the re-evaluation cycles which are usually 5 or 10 years.

Let us understand that the voluntary accreditation process is neither an inspection nor a financial or managerial audit process. It does not systematically assess probity and fair practices as they pertain to educational consumers. It is intended to render professional judgments, not to enforce regulations or to police institutional behavior or to act as enforcement agents of governments. Accreditation by voluntary agencies should not be expected to serve as a guarantor of fair practice in specific detail or at specific times. Nevertheless, I have reason to believe that some new practices and guidelines and procedures will gradually be invoked by voluntary agencies in order to provide some kind of general surveillance in this area without getting into prescriptive and detailed, specific scrutiny of consumer interests and fair practices during the evaluation and accreditation process.

Let me suggest just a few strengths and weaknesses of both voluntary and governmental accrediting agencies. Concerning some strengths of voluntary agencies, and I emphasize that the list is not comprehensive:

1. The heavy emphasis on self-study.
2. The instructive experiences gained by members of an academic community in serving on peer evaluation teams.

3. Voluntary accrediting agencies help to protect institutions against political encroachments by outside organizations, deleterious meddling by inept administrators or chief executive officers, governors, legislatures and misguided boards of trustees as well as incompetent state bureaucrats.
4. They assist in promoting the diversity and pluralism of higher education, but I think we have to admit that there seems to be some increase in viewing the higher education community as homogenized grey. Do evaluators spend the time they should in understanding the institution's background and its specific nature?
5. They have a remarkable ready access to the most competent educators in their territories or even in the country, for making peer judgments on an institution's quality. No other system of evaluation could be developed which has such free access to fine minds and at the same time is so immune from cajoling by politicians and incompetent government bureaucrats.

What about some imperfections or criticisms? I don't intend to be comprehensive here, either:

1. I have an unhappy feeling that the standards for institutional accreditation have slipped in the last twenty years, that regional expectations on quality have been lowered and marginal institutions have had holy water sprinkled on them which should have gone unsprinkled either permanently or for some longer

period of time than was the case (how many institutions are turned down more than once for initial accreditation). If that feeling is true, if not wholly accurate, this slippage probably coincided with the troubles of the sixties, when many faculties, pandering to students, pusillanimous in confronting student demands or driven by liberal guilt for minority status and economic disadvantage, clearly lowered their grading standards, their expectations for learning, and abandoned curricular requirements. Moreover, we clearly entered a new egalitarian post-secondary educational era that substituted for the relative elitism of the past. And finally, I throw in the ill-fated, in my view, dollar linkage between accreditation and eligibility for federal funds. There is a substantial body of opinion that the cash nexus between federal funds and accreditation put accrediting agencies under great pressure not to exclude even the most marginal institutions. I made an early case not to get into the business but, of course, to no avail. As Steve Bailey has said, equality and quality are not sworn enemies and there must be way-stations between snobbery and slobbery. Incidentally, one criticism that states never have to cope with is that in regional accreditation, an institution is either fully accredited or it is not; there are no gradations in quality made public. My own gut assumption is that public ranking of institutions is

impossible and will never come about. After all, let's not forget that the lower 1/2 is what makes the upper 1/2 possible.

2. Another criticism is that regional agencies don't make their reports public. I think they should.
3. Accrediting agencies have been notably lax in doing much or in being rigorous about off-campus extension centers, programs abroad, institutional branches of parent institutions, and educational services provided to military bases. American education is ubiquitous now, world-wide. There is notable laxity, if not downright shoddiness in much of this work. After all there's a good profit at marginal cost and marginal value.
4. The study of outcomes as a measure of the achievement of an institution's goals and objectives is still largely confused with inputs rather than outputs. As someone has said, since there are always more inputs than outputs, there must be some loose puts around.
5. Back scratching or cronyism. Moreover, some evaluation reports are too gently and diplomatically written for the message intended to be communicated.
6. Regional institutional accreditation applies to a whole institution which may or may not say anything about the inadequacies of particular programs. This policy no doubt has contributed to the proliferation of professional accrediting agencies most of which are unnecessary.

Good technical or professional programs leading to specific careers or jobs will accredit themselves through successful employment of their graduates and state licensing, and a poor one should have its license revoked by the state. Most of these special professional accrediting agencies are self-serving, protective trade associations, rich in their own conceits about their territorial imperatives and presumed monopoly on wisdom.

7. The regional agencies differ markedly in their procedures and standards and in their sophistication and strength. There are too many differences in their present work to generate the confidence needed by the public and governments. The Texas Coordinating Board ought to know. I expect that by the year 2000, or at least by 2020, when we will have better vision, the several regional accrediting agencies will form one national organization. Standards would be raised, and it would provide a better bulwark against the Federal government.

8. Another weakness, I think, in regional accrediting is that the agencies are so slow, if they ever get moving, in addressing social issues having great educational impact. Why do they speak with a muted or muffled voice on such issues as collective bargaining, affirmative action for minority groups and the handicapped. How about Title IX and equity for women? James Thurber once remarked that a woman's place is in the wrong

which is clearly unlike my definition of equality: Equality is not when a female Einstein gets promoted to Assistant Professor. Equality is when a female schlemiel moves ahead as fast as a male schlemiel. Again, how about the egregious abuses and excesses in intercollegiate athletics and the exploitation of athletes, especially black athletes. How about racial desegregation?*

These are some things mostly involving justice and equity, but state governments haven't been much better either in these matters.

9. It well may be that overstressing institutional self-study and self-improvement has resulted in a weakening of concern for quality by the voluntary agencies and for consumer issues.

10. One reason accreditation has undergone public desanctification is that voluntary accrediting agencies have not tried or have not been able to make clear to the public the norms they are using to judge educational quality. Their procedures are generally justified but they have not convinced the public of their justification.

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* The case of North Carolina is notorious and the day, July 28, after this speech was given, The Department of Education had decided to notify Texas officials (before the presidential election, yet) that they must prepare a plan for desegregating their higher education system or face a loss of Federal aid. The student body at most of the 38 state-supported senior colleges and universities and 47 community colleges is overwhelmingly white or overwhelmingly black. At one institution, Texas A. & M., out of 21,766 undergraduates in 1976-77, only 66 were blacks, and of them, 50 were varsity athletes.

Now what about the states and their ability to cope with quality?

First, let us acknowledge that there is a vast difference in the 50 states in their capacity or ability to deal with quality in higher education. That difference is greater, in my view, than the difference between the weakest and the strongest regional agencies. Moreover, no one questions that the several states could readily, if they have not already done so, develop minimum acceptable standards for authorization and continued operation of all post-secondary institutions in order to ensure the public that a) legitimate educational opportunity exists in those institutions, b) that students are protected from fraudulent practices and educationally ineffective programs, and c) that such standards permit diversity and innovation.

The real question comes in when states attempt to go beyond procedures and policies which establish minimum criteria for authorization to operate or to continue operations, and engage in extensive qualitative assessment that implies a higher level of institutional quality and more select standing than state licensure.

For a state to engage in mandating compliance with average or superior standards calls for 1) a high level of sophistication, 2) a lot of courage, 4) resources to employ skilled evaluators from other states, recognized peers of those to be evaluated, and 4) involves running on a collision course with voluntary accrediting agencies.

Research shows that to a far greater extent than is sometimes assumed, states are already engaged in institutional and program evaluation that goes beyond the level of simple licensure and authorization. And both public and private institutions are affected. And the Education Commission of the States, as you know, is encouraging further developments in these directions. Research also strongly indicates that many states not now or only slightly engaged in accrediting as against licensure work, intend to do so.

But a state agency with the necessary legal authority can and must do what a voluntary regional accrediting agency cannot do, and that is, kill off poor programs and institutions, programs and institutions that are no longer needed, or programs that are in excessive duplication of others. But practicing institutional euthanasia is an art requiring skill of a high order. That is not the function of a voluntary accrediting agency; theirs is to assess and improve quality, not to put institutions or programs out of business (they seldom withdraw accreditation). That is not the primary function of a state, either, but when it becomes necessary to exercise it, and the rate will increase in this decade, a state must and should wield its powers in order to eliminate shoddiness and duplication of programs which are unnecessary and wasteful of resources.

Moreover states are more readily equipped, or can be, to carry out effective consumer protection practices--and with clout. Finally, in several states there is authority to approve or evaluate individual programs submitted by institutions for approval or licensure.

So all of this leads me into the final part of my talk this evening.

In sum, what has lead to stronger state involvement in the preservation, enhancement, and control of quality? A lot of things: The sizable costs of expanded higher education: (legislators are trying to find a cheaper way of making educational history); declining enrollments, increasing competition for students; retrenchment in public expenditures; the struggle for survival of, particularly, private institutions; increased demands for consumer protection from fraud, abuse, and error; proliferation of off-campus and out-of-state programs, otherwise called the colonizing tendency of American higher education; the uncongenial factors of slipping public confidence in the value of higher education and the tougher pressures resulting from inflation; the need for developing the management of decline, or creative frugality and retrenchment; the startling growth of non-traditional studies, often shoddy; the extensive programs offered by institutions on military bases; the growth of state and federal student aid and institutional grant programs based on conditions of institutional eligibility that include authorization of institutions to operate within states; and finally, perceived weaknesses of voluntary institutional accreditation, including the lack of program-by-program evaluation; a new conservative, less egalitarian era (I understand that the plane Reagan flies in has two right wings).

This is quite a list. And let's face it: Fewer new institutions or programs are being initiated; there's more fun and work

in the newer arena of quality for those running out of employment in the old one.

I have no doubt that the increased assertiveness of the states to engage in the evaluation of quality has led Ernie Boyer, former president of the State University of New York, former U.S. Commissioner of Education, and now President of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, to emphasize that his organization is going to conduct studies in three areas, especially, including the governance and control of higher education. In part, this intense and acute interest grew out of his New York experience.

We inaugurated a program in the early 1970's to review for quality and prune down, the number of doctoral programs in New York in both public and private institutions. In one unit of the State University of New York, we discontinued two programs in English and History. Chancellor Boyer did not think we had the authority and sued us. We won unanimous decisions in three successive courts. End of story.

I should also add that the condition and the quality of undergraduate education is one of the two other stressed areas of investigation.

The progressive concern of the states with accountability, quality determinations in program reviews, institutional effectiveness and integrity, and consumer protection has increased to the point where the interests and concerns of state post-secondary agencies and voluntary accrediting agencies are converging and are on a collision course, as I said earlier. The relationships

between state agencies and the voluntary accrediting agencies have become increasingly unfriendly and adversarial, resulting in alienation and, in the words of the nuclear physicist, more fission than fusion. Regional accrediting agencies have often looked upon the states as inept and junior grade imperialists and have accepted them, if at all, on sufferance and with a patronizing attitude.

Now regional agencies are running somewhat scared, feeling threats from both sides of government, federal and state, and are interested, indeed in effecting some kind of working relationship. On their part, the state post-secondary coordinating systems may want to strike some hard bargains with the voluntary agencies, including the public disclosure of evaluation reports. I know that state agencies feel ignored in the regional accrediting process.

On the other hand, some state agencies with fresh new laws and powers, and equipped with aggressive personnel, exuberant boundlessness, and something less than humility, have disregarded voluntary accrediting agencies and have rushed headlong into a higher order of quality determination, unsettling their higher education communities and the regionals.

Somehow, I am reminded in all of this, of the Church of England cleric who said to his non-conformist colleague one day: "We are both doing God's work; you in your way and I in His."

I believe the tensions, conflicts, and recriminations now created are harmful to both sides and will ultimately negatively affect the very institutions both are trying to help and serve.

There is a calculated interdependence between government and higher institutions that was built into the American democratic polity by those wise Founding Fathers, men like Thomas Jefferson, who knew so well that only an educated people could remain a free people. But they also knew that there was a boundary beyond which government must not go. There was both a reluctance to rule and to be ruled. Too much governmental involvement or intervention in education could well result in unwarranted intrusions into the internal management of institutions, stiffle creativity, and yes, too, impede the critical assessment of government that is a proper and important function of education in a free and open society. It is therefore essential to maintain honorable "spaces in our togetherness," to quote a lovely phrase from Kahlil Gibran.

Along that vein, as we used to say at the blood bank, you might appreciate a story told of a meeting of Asian and American educators. The Asians were quick to agree that their problem was how to get from their respective governments the money to buy academic talent and to build campuses without getting political leaders into the educational decision-making process as a quid pro quo for their largess. At one point in the discussion, an Oxford-educated Asian scholar was arguing, in effect, that the academic community should relax and enjoy its role as an object of politics and government. "The marriage with Caesar must be consummated," he declared. "There's no alternative." "Agreed," interjected another Asian university administrator, "but the question is, 'How many times a week?'"

I see no alternative for state agencies and voluntary accrediting agencies but to enter into a new era of close collaboration. It does not have to be a marriage of love, but it should be one of mutual respect. To that end, I endorse the proposed agreement developed by SHEEO entitled, Statement on Accreditation/State Policies and Relations to Regional Accrediting Commissions. It represents accommodations and compromises for both parties and, with goodwill, should lead to a more skilled and elegant harmony, or concinnity, to use one of my favorite words. As Casey Stengel used to say, you could look it up.

I would go one step further. New York and the Middle States Association had the most congenial and harmonious relationships when the Commission on Higher Education had a state representative on the Commission. The chilling effect in those relationships began after that practice was discontinued. There is an interlocking complexity in educational affairs today, and I see no conflict of interests in having at least one state representative on an accrediting commission. This would be in reciprocity for the practice many states have of using representatives of higher institutions in many aspects of their own work.

It is possible to evaluate for minimum standards of quality, promote excellence, and carry out responsible innovation at the same time.

That sounds like a large agenda, and it is. But it is not one that state higher education agencies must carry out by themselves. There are other partners in the promotion of excellence and the evaluation of quality, and pretty sophisticated, too, and

it would be a disservice to higher education to ignore the existence of those other partners. And the regional agencies cannot go it alone, either. As a highly competent executive director of one regional agency said recently, if in their zeal to fend off federal or state control of accreditation, they continuously extended the policing and prescriptive powers of non-governmental accrediting agencies, these voluntary agencies would lose their character and will have gained nothing.

Cooperative activity has many benefits. Joint visitations to institutions provides state agencies with the benefits of judgments by a larger group of skilled people, yet enables each to do its own work, and there is often mutual reinforcement of those judgments as one group acts as a check and balance on the other, thus increasing the care with which evaluations are made. Another benefit is the mutual and continuing exchange of information between visits. The burden of evaluations for institutions is reduced. Finally, since state agencies usually have limited resources, cooperation with voluntary accrediting agencies enables the states to concentrate their efforts on areas of high priority, such as doctoral program, vocational programs, the health professions, teacher education, or areas involving intense and hot preoccupation of the governor, the legislature, or the public.

State agencies and accrediting agencies have mutual aims in respect of quality, maintaining diversity, promoting the most effective education possible, and in being responsive both to the institutions and the welfare of the public. Cooperation between

state higher education agencies and accrediting associations can serve those ends better than either of them can when acting alone.

You have a session coming up on the roles, relationships and responsibilities of states, federal agencies and accrediting associations. Another title would be: Who does what, how, when, and to whom? As far as I am concerned, I am reminded of the Miss Universe contest which eventually boiled down to three voluptuous candidates. Discerning no difference in their physical prepossession and measurements, the judges finally elected to pick the winner on the basis of the answer to a problem, namely, if you were cast on an island in the middle of the ocean alone with twenty men, what would you do. The American girl answered: "I would find the handsomest man in the group, win his affections, and have him protect me from the rest of the men." The English girl said: "I would find the strongest man in the group and win his affections, and then help him rule the island." The third girl, from France, said: "Gentlemen, I know what the question is, but what's the problem?"

And with reference to the federal government vis-à-vis the states and voluntary accrediting agencies, you might recall the story of the cross-eyed rooster who was chasing two hens for clearly obvious intentions. He had a difficult time catching up with either one of them for both were racing erratically in different directions. Finally, one panting hen on the run squawked over to the other hen, "Gee, maybe we better stick together or he's going to miss both of us."

Clearly the present policies and practices of the Division of Eligibility and Agency Evaluation need to change. One possibility is the Congressional establishment of an independent Agency that would operate under clearly defined criteria for institutional eligibility to receive federal funds and for agencies, state or voluntary, to qualify for the purpose of certifying institutional eligibility for federal funds and purposes. Under the present inadequate arrangements, there can be and there is, political intervention.

I close with the humility of the retiring professor at the conclusion of his last lecture to a group of medical students: "Ladies and gentlemen, one-half of what I have told you is not true. Your problem is that I do not know which half that is."